

Communiqué

The Education Council today held its third meeting of the year via video link. Ministers discussed a range of key policy issues and progressed significant education reforms.

National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Strategy

Council endorsed the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Strategy. The strategy maintains a strong national focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education, while enabling jurisdictions and communities to determine and implement localised approaches. With oversight provided by senior officials, the strategy includes national collaborative actions grouped under five key themes for collective implementation by the Australian Government, states and territories – Attendance and Engagement, Transition Points (including pathways to post-school options), Early Childhood Transitions, Workforce and Australian Curriculum.

Ministers expressed their appreciation for the work of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Advisory Group in developing the strategy, and look forward to the implementation of the strategy for the benefit of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people.

STEM Education

Ministers agreed on the scope for the drafting of a new national Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) school education strategy, framed by a focus on the long-term outcomes for students. The strategy will seek to build on the momentum of the significant number of STEM in education initiatives and programs currently underway or planned for at the national, state and local levels, and focus on ensuring that Australian students are equipped with the necessary STEM-related skills, knowledge and interest that they will need to succeed in the rapidly changing world beyond the school gates.

A draft strategy will be presented to the Education Council for consideration by the end of 2015.

Online assessment

An update was provided to the Education Council regarding the transition to NAPLAN online, highlighting two research studies currently being undertaken by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) - the device effect study and the online item trialling study. These studies have commenced in selected schools, both involving students participating in tests within an online environment.

National user acceptance testing of the online assessment platform will commence in April 2016 and be available to all schools in July 2016 to allow schools and systems to become familiar with the platform. Ministers noted the importance of each jurisdiction continuing to develop implementation plans and refine cost estimates in the continued transition to NAPLAN online.

Review of ACARA

The Education Council considered an update on the actions arising following the review of ACARA. The review report included recommendations covering curriculum, assessment, data collection, reporting and governance.

Ministers endorsed the recommendations made in the Review and agreed to further work being undertaken between now and the end of 2015.

Students at risk of radicalisation

The Education Council received an update from the Australian Government regarding the review of current initiatives supporting students at risk of radicalisation. Ministers considered the ongoing work of senior officials in progressing the review, and noted the Australian Government's recent correspondence to state and territory ministers to raise awareness of the *'Living Safe Together'* website.

Further advice regarding the review will be provided to Ministers at the next Education Council meeting.

Initial Teacher Education

Education Council endorsed the adoption of a national *Literacy and Numeracy Test for Initial Teacher Education Students*. The Test will provide the means to ensure that students completing initial teacher education possess personal literacy and numeracy skills in the top 30 per cent of the population.

Council also agreed to new guidelines for the selection of entrants into initial teacher education programs. Rigorous candidate selection into initial teacher education programs will ensure those entering the profession will have both the academic and non-academic skills to become effective teachers and will improve the quality of teaching in Australia.

Council committed to strengthening and streamlining the national approach to accreditation of initial teacher education programs in 2016, noting that tailored transition approaches will be applied to existing nationally accredited programs and state accredited programs. States and territories will engage with key stakeholders, including registration authorities and higher education institutions, to plan an appropriate transition pending agreement of the revised *Accreditation of Initial Teacher Education Programs in Australia: Standards and Procedures*, which will be presented to Education Council for consideration before the end of 2015.

Improvements to My School

Education Council endorsed ACARA's suggested improvements to *My School* reporting. Changes will include a new *My School* landing page with concise and accessible information and a review of standard text on all pages, to ensure that it is readily understandable by a range of audiences. A new measure of student attendance (the proportion of students attending 90 per cent or more of the time) will also be added to the *My School* website.

Australian Curriculum: Foundation to Year 10

Council endorsed changes to Foundation to Year 10 Australian Curriculum content descriptions and achievement standards for English, mathematics, science, humanities and social sciences, the arts,

technologies and health and physical education. These changes address two key themes from the recent Australian Curriculum review - 'resolving the overcrowded curriculum' and 'rebalancing the curriculum'.

Foundation to Year 10 Australian Curriculum: Languages for Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Modern Greek, Spanish and Vietnamese, and Work Studies Years 9-10 were also endorsed by Council.

Ministers noted that the revised curriculum will be published on the Australian Curriculum website in mid-October. State and territory school and curriculum authorities will determine the implementation timelines for their schools.

Improving access to the Australian Curriculum for parents

Ministers received an update on ACARA's proposed actions to improve parent access to the Australian Curriculum, which was one of the themes referred to ACARA for action from the Review of the Australian Curriculum. ACARA has undertaken extensive consultation with national peak bodies for parents including the Australian Parents Council, Australian Council of State School Organisations, Isolated Children's Parents' Association and Catholic School Parents Australia.

Ministers were informed that the preliminary findings of the consultation included that there is significant scope to make the Australian Curriculum easier to understand, and that parents want improved information about what their child will be learning as they progress through school.

ACARA will develop a section on the Australian Curriculum website aimed specifically at parents.

Improving access to the Australian Curriculum for students with disability

Ministers received advice from ACARA on actions taken to improve access to the Australian Curriculum for students with disability, which was one of the themes referred to ACARA for action from the Review of the Australian Curriculum. ACARA has reviewed international approaches taken to support students with significant intellectual disability in a selection of countries, including England, Finland, Singapore and New Zealand. It has also undertaken consultation with the members of its Students with Disability Advisory Group, which includes peak bodies, government and non-government school education representatives, support and advocacy groups and academics with expertise in disability and inclusivity.

As a result of this process Ministers were advised that ACARA will undertake a range of initiatives including the development of new illustrations of practice, the provision of links to relevant resources, development of additional examples of how general capabilities can be demonstrated, and work with states and territories to facilitate the sharing of experiences and examples of effective approaches.

Reducing domestic violence

The Education Council discussed a request from the Council of Australian Governments regarding initiatives to help reduce violence against women and children. Recognising the importance of this issue and the role that education can play in influencing the attitudes of young people to violence, Ministers requested that officials provide advice on linking learning areas of the Australian Curriculum to anti-violence programs, and the delivery of such programs to students at key stages of their schooling and development. Ministers will provide an update to COAG on this matter later in 2015.

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Media queries: Greg Donaghue, Education Council Secretariat on (03) 9639 0588 or greg.donaghue@ec.edu.au